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The Cheerful Letter

Every place a church; every day the Lord's day; all events blessings; all joy thanksgiving; and all nature and life full of Good.—James Freeman Clarke.

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A MAN'S RIGHT TO HAPPINESS

"Behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is."—REV. xxii: 12.

When a young person contemplates undertaking some great responsibility, which shall open the door of an entirely new phase of life, almost the first question that comes to mind is the question, "Shall I be happy if I do this?"

The question is common enough. We all recognize it at once, for it would be strange indeed if we had not each of us asked ourselves that question many times during life. But the question betrays the existence of two ideas in people's minds. It implies two popular notions regarding happiness, which are, perhaps, more erroneous than would seem possible. When the young person on the brink of a great, new enterprise, asks that question, "Shall I be happy if I do so and so?" it betrays, in the first place, the notion in his mind that his happiness is something that is governed by outward circumstances. It implies the belief that if he puts himself into a certain set of conditions, those conditions will render up to him a certain amount of happiness, which shall be greater or less according to the nature of the conditions. And it betrays, in the second place, the idea that he has a right to happiness; that he has the right of claiming from the world a certain amount of happiness as his just and lawful due.

In an allegorical poem by the Hon. John Hay, called "The Tale of the Shirt," it happened that the king of that country lay ill of a perplexing malady, from which he could recover, so the royal physician assured him, only when he had slept one night in the shirt of a happy man. Couriers had forthwith been despatched to scour the country-side, find that happy man, and strip him of his shirt,—but the task had proved too baffling. Everywhere they had been answered by the sigh of unfulfilled desire, until in sheer weariness of failure they were plodding reluctantly back to the palace. But even as they wend dejectedly along the highway, they come suddenly upon a ragged vagabond, lying in the sun by the roadside, and singing and shouting in a very exuberance of gayety. To their question the merry rogue replies that of course he is happy —the world is so beautiful, the sun is so warm, the air is so sweet, the meadows are so bright; how could he be any other than happy? But when, with thankful hearts, the couriers ask him for his shirt to take to the king, he answers, with another paroxysm of mirth, that he has not a shirt to his back. And so the baffled couriers return to their royal master with this significant piece of information, that the only happy man in his whole kingdom was so wretchedly poor that he had no shirt. And the king, after thinking a while, rises from his bed, and goes quietly about his royal tasks, a graver and a more thoughtful monarch. It is, of course, possible to make the objection that the ragged vagabond was merely a figment of the author's imagination. True enough, and yet he has thousands of prototypes in living, breathing men and women. And they all stand as witnesses to this great fact of human nature—that a man's happiness depends not upon his outward circumstances, but upon his innate temperament.

People are too readily attacked by the

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insidious logic of fatalism. It seems so very plausible to say that a man's temperament is decided independently of his own wish or desire, and that therefore he must be content to remain fettered and bound by that native temperament. It seems so very plausible to say that what is, is—that what will be, will be—and that all attempts to change one's destiny, or to modify one's disposition, are as vain as it would be to try and change one hair black or white. It all sounds very plausible indeed, but it is not true. The doctrine of fatalism is not only insidious and vicious, it is also untrue. We **can** modify our dispositions. We **can** change our temperaments. The whole long history of human growth stands as a glorious testimony to the success of human self-development. And as it is true of a society, so is it true in equal measure of an individual—the strongest agent in procuring individual well-being is neither birth, nor breeding, nor inherited temperament, nor outward condition, but the ever-active power of self-culture which we may consciously employ within our own hearts.

Here is a wonderful fact to which we men and women are too easily indifferent. Self-cultivation is no myth, no high-sounding and empty phrase. It is a real possibility for every one. Surely there is no need to prove to us, with our American traditions, with our countless examples of strong, noble, self-cultured men and women, with our Washington and our Lincoln,—there is no need to prove to us the possibility of self-cultivation. It is in the very air we breathe. Our national history is redolent with that sturdy spirit.

Four hundred years ago, the staunch little caravel, "Santa Maria," set out from Spain to discover a new world. She was a good ship of her kind. With silken banners and glistening sails, she issued forth upon the bosom of that mighty Sea of Darkness. But before long an angry billow broke her rudder, and a head wind drove her out of her course, and a cross-current drifted her back, and a black tempest whelmed her in desperate stress, and a quiet calm left her idle upon the waters. She was at the mercy of her external influences. She had no power from within, either to neutralize an obstacle, or to supply a deficiency. It was only by the mercy of Providence and the hardihood of her captain that she accomplished her errand. To-day our six-day liner starts from New York or Southampton, with her journey timed to the hour. Is the tide against her? What of that! Is the tempest black? Are the billows angry? Does the reeking fog hem her round? What are tempest, or tide, or fog, or calm, to her! With her compass and her chart, with her ten thousand horse-power dynamos purring their mighty note in her bosom, she plunges on her way. Do the waves beat against her prow? She has the power from within to dash them aside. Do the winds favor her course, and fill her welcoming sails? She shall add their strength to the power from within, and make the better speed. And when her time is up, behold, the headlands of her port are sighted, and her journey is accomplished. Not by miracle, not by chance, but by the irresistible might of the power from within, linked with the external influences, she runs her stated course, and enters her haven promptly and safely at the last.

It is so with the man who uses his own energies in conjunction with the chances that surround him. There is no limit to the glorious self-culture of such a man. We speak of the difficulty of self-development, of acquiring truer characters, and sweeter dispositions, and nobler temperaments. There is no bound

set to the achievements in these lines, that are opened to such a man. He has yoked the power within him, to the influences that surround him, and he runs his course of life in safety and in certainty; and he reaches his haven of success without fail. Is he beset by sorrows and ruin? The power within him shall, by its sturdy might, drive him onward through the sorrow and the ruin. Do obstacles and head winds conspire to thwart his course and destroy his happiness? The power within him shall hold him steadfast to the work before him, and shall bring him a happiness which circumstances cannot tarnish. Is his temperament such that life looks sad and gray, and laughter is vain? The power that dwells within him shall mould his temperament, and shall train him in self-control and self-devotion; and the sombre melancholy must give way to a deep optimism, and to the stern joy of hard-won victory. To such a man, happiness will be the fruit, not of circumstance, but of self-culture and self-control. He himself shall possess the resource that lifts him above the thraldom of his environment.

Now to go back once more to the beginning; there is one other popular misconception which is betrayed by that eager question, "Shall I be happy if I do so and so?" That conception is, that each one has a right to be happy. When that question is asked at the threshold of some enterprise, it is equivalent to a claim that a certain modicum of happiness is naturally due to every one, and that every one may lawfully draw upon the world for their share of happiness. We have already answered this claim. It is not altogether justly founded. No one has a natural and inalienable right to happiness, any more than the laborer has a right to his wage until he has earned it. But every man has the right to earn it. And the way to earn it is the way that we have seen,—the way of real living; the way of earnest effort; the way of true growth and true self-cultivation. When that way of effort and growth has been faithfully journeyed, then man has a right to happiness. And **then**, in obedience to one of God's surest and holiest principles, his generous rewards of heavenly happiness shall be poured into man's heart without measure and without stint. "Behold, I come quickly," says a heavenly voice, "and my reward is with me, to render to each one according as his work is." He who labors faithfully and truly in this wonderful life of growth and opportunity shall have his happiness, because the Almighty God of Inexorable Law and Infallible Justice dwells in Heaven. And so long as he reigns supreme, his divine rewards shall be shed upon his faithful sons and daughters.

From a sermon by
REV. CHARLES E. PARK.

PRONOUNS

By KARL WILSON BAKER

The Lord said,
"Say 'WE' ";
But I shook my head,
Hid my hands behind my back, and said,
Stubbornly,
"I."

The Lord said,
"Say 'WE' ";
But I looked upon them, grimy and all awry.
Myself in all those twisted shapes? Ah, No!
Distastefully I turned my head away,
Persisting,
"They."

The Lord said,
"Say 'WE' ";
And I,
At last,
Richer by a hoard
Of years,
And Tears,
Looked in their eyes and found the heavy word
That bent my neck and bowed my head;
Like a shamed school boy then I mumbled low,
"WE, Lord."

CORRESPONDENTS AND APPEALS

Letters should be addressed to Mrs. Laura M. Hurst, 78 Penfield Street, Roslindale, Mass.

Persons writing to the Department for the first time should ask for an enrollment blank and give as reference the name and address of their minister.

When a correspondent moves to a new address, notice should be sent to Headquarters, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., and to those persons who have been sending letters and reading matter.

It is necessary to state positively that the Cheerful Letter Exchange is not a "clothing bureau" and not a "charitable" society in the usual sense of the word.

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of its magazine by addressing letters asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who disobeys this rule will be dropped from the list, and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by the Central Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to the Chairman of this Department.

Many people do care for just the kind of friendly service for which we are organized. We limit our efforts to them and their wishes.

CHEERFUL LETTER WORKERS

In this issue appear the reports of the various departments of the *Cheerful Letter* Exchange. We urge the reading of each one very carefully, for they are full of valuable information which will help all chairmen during the year to come. If you have any questions regarding them, write to the chairman of that Department and she will be very glad to answer.

July and August are vacation months for many of us. It is not so easy to get off letters when one is away from their desk, but here is the opportunity of sending picture postcards during the summer. Wherever you vacation, please do not forget your *Cheerful Letter* shut-in. A picture postcard and a friendly word keep the contact unbroken throughout the year.

There are several shut-ins waiting to become *regular correspondents.* Please confer with your committee to see if you cannot adopt just one more name.

CORRESPONDENTS

These *regular correspondents* may be adopted after postcard consultation with Mrs. Laura M. Hurst, 78 Penfield Street, Roslindale, Mass. This is important and it should be done in order to avoid duplication in arranging for *regular correspondents.*

1. Mrs. John Bristow, R. 1, Athens, Tex., is 72 years old and has 6 grown children. She lives quite a distance from any church or any other activity and thinks perhaps the *Cheerful Letter* Exchange will brighten her life by writing occasionally and sending any kind of reading, together with some picture scrapbooks.

2. A long while ago Mrs. Luther Caudle, R. 1, B. 184, Peachland, N. C., asked for a *regular correspondent,* but space has not permitted same until this issue. She is 25 and has 1 boy, aged 1, and 1 girl, aged 3.

3. I was so glad to get your Enrollment Blank and I hope it means someone will write me soon. I am 67 years old and crippled, and my poor husband is almost blind and cannot hear so very well. Will some good friend cheer us up a bit? Mrs. Mattie Venable, R. F. D. 1, Atkins, Ark.

4. I am a lady at the age 25 with a little boy, age 4. We live 25 miles from town and my husband is away a lot. I like to write letters and receive them, too,

so if some worker feels like writing, I hope I am selected. Mrs. Dewey C. Jones, Rupert, Ark.

5. Mrs. J. M. Bidwell, R. F. D. 1, Decatur, Tenn., is 54 years old with 3 boys and 1 girl at home. There used to be 10. Her husband has been troubled with fever and cannot do any hard work, so Mrs. Bidwell keeps rather busy. She longs for some good reading to keep off the weary time and a few quilt scraps. A monthly correspondent will be especially appreciated.

6. Mrs. Freeda Ewin, Red Rock, Ark., is 35 years old and has 5 children, 4 boys, ages 2, 5 (twins), 12 and a girl, aged 9. They work a small farm in the mountains and get to church about once a month. She asks for a *regular correspondent.*

7. Thought I would write to see if you would get me a *regular correspondent* for a girl, aged 21. I have 4 sisters and 3 brothers and live in a farming section 12 miles from town. Even with our large family time gets heavy, so I hope someone will send some fancy sewing and quilt scraps. Miss Louise Porter, R. 1, B. 128, Wadesboro, N. C.

APPEALS

These Appeals need not be answered a second time and we ask you not to take them as a *regular correspondent* no matter how appealing the acknowledgment is for the package. For any exception please address this Department.

1. I am a mother with 8 little children. Our family seems to have all kinds of sickness and I can tell you things are not too encouraging. First of all it would please me very much to see my letter in print and next I would like to receive some quilt scraps and just anything to amuse the youngsters, ages 4 months to 15 years. Mrs. Ethel B. Walker, Campbell, Va.

2. Miss Rose Sheets, Warrensville, N. C., has been a shut-in all spring and just now is feeling a great deal better. She is 29 years old and enjoys all kinds of sewing, especially embroidery. Any kind of reading would also be acceptable.

3. I am a married woman 23 years old and have 5 children, ages from 2 to 9 years. My health isn't good and I have to stay in so much. We live a long way from church and school and it keeps me busy looking after my young family. Reading, pictures or sewing materials would bring a great deal of joy to us. Mrs. Laura Rakes, R. 3, Ferrum, Va.

4. Mrs. Saphroma Duvall, Grassy Creek, N. C., is twice a widow and 66 years old. Her one son is married with a large family to support. Her health is very bad and she would enjoy getting some reading or any kinds of quilt pieces. She doesn't have any money to buy anything of this kind.

5. I am the mother of 4 children and live in the mountains of North Carolina. There isn't anything of much interest here so I thought if you printed an Appeal for me we might get some reading or scrapbooks. I have 4 boys, ages 4, 10, 12 and 15. If you would care to include some quilt scraps I can use those, too. Mrs. Dora Dalinger, Husk, N. C.

6. Mrs. Effie Hahn, R. 1, Oakboro, N. C., has had a great deal of sadness in her life this past year. She is depressed and lonely and hopes that some of the Cheerful Letter friends will cheer her and the children with some good reading and sewing. There are 5 children, 2 boys, ages 11 and 18, and 3 girls, ages 8 months, 15 and 19.

7. It will give me much enjoyment if you can see your way clear to publish my request. I am the mother of 8 children, 4 boys, ages 4, 6, 14 and 16; 4 girls, 1, 4, 9 and 18. May we have some reading and scrapbooks? Mrs. Lillie Russell, Hattieville, Ark.

8. Rev. M. E. Cotton, Mann's Harbor, N. C., is anxious to establish a Sunday School library in his Church and asks our help in this venture. Here is an opportunity for many of our workers to send suitable books for a worthwhile enterprise. We ask those interested to limit their contributions to books only.

Courtesy is to do and say the kindest thing in the kindest way.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE 1936-1937

Until a year ago, *Cheerful Letter* Exchange was merely a name of a committee in the General Alliance; therefore, this annual report is presented with some misgivings, for there is much to learn. I know not if I have been able to give to you anything more than reports and figures, but I do know that I have received from these conferences something that has made this committee almost, if not quite, the most important in the Alliance work to me.

The friendly service, the cheerful letters and the kindly thoughts expressed must mean more than mere words to the many people far and wide who are at the ends of the lines stretching from these conferences at 25 Beacon St., and inspired, we dare to hope, by them.

More work could be done if every Branch Alliance had a *Cheerful Letter* Committee, as the work is restricted only by lack of workers, not by work to be done. Conferences have been held each month, October to May inclusive. Four meetings of the Central Committee and three round table luncheon discussions were also held. Mrs. Stevens has presided at them all. The average attendance has been fifty-six, with thirty-six branches represented. Waltham had the largest number of delegates, Hingham was second, Canton third and Lexington a close fourth. A very successful coffee party was held in the Fifield room following the March meeting, at which members of the Central Committee were hostesses to seventy-five guests.

Early in April, two hundred and thirty questionnaires sent to committees brought replies from only one hundred and thirty-two. The Central Committee realize that facts and figures cannot measure the friendly service we aim to share, but how else can we know what is being done? For obvious reasons files must be kept, and they are correct and useful only as you help us to keep them. Think of the confusion and annoyance if we had no records of what is going on. May I emphasize again the importance of returning your questionnaire, thus doing your share toward attaining a higher standard of efficiency in the machinery necessary to carry on this important work.

The following figures are based on the returned questionnaires: Only ninety-nine branches subscribe to the *Cheerful Letter Magazine*. How can a committee function properly without it? It is an indispensable link between the Central and Local committees, containing information, changes of policy, suggestions for work to be done and Appeals to be answered. Only eighty-three committees use the Sunshine bags. Special permission is given by the Board of the General Alliance to use these little bags in which to collect small change to help defray the expense of publishing and issuing the *Cheerful Letter Magazine*.

Because many of our shut-ins cannot pay, and the modest subscription price of fifty cents per year does not quite cover the cost of publishing, we ask your help in this way. If every committee would do its share it might not be necessary to send out special letters each year asking for help. Why not ask for a Sunshine bag and then remember to return it before April 30?

Replies from one hundred and fourteen committees record nine hundred and twenty-nine correspondents. There are more than twice as many on the list, one hundred and four having been assigned this year. What are the other one hundred and sixteen committees doing? The files are checked from reports each year. Can't you help us by sending names and correct addresses of your regular correspondents? Sixty-seven committees subscribe to three hundred and eighteen magazines for their correspondents, sixty-one answered appeals printed in the magazine, and fifty-eight have sent 27,446 books and magazines to other than rural schools or libraries. The most popular part of the work seems to be sending Christmas parcels to correspondents. One hundred and twenty-eight committees re-

ported this activity. My earnest appeal as your new Secretary is that you will help me to give a more complete report next year.

Several changes have taken place in the *Cheerful Letter* family this year, but their places have been filled and the work goes on. See the *Cheerful Letter Magazine* for new addresses.

We hold in loving memory several faithful workers who have passed to a large reward. It is our rare privilege to keep the candle burning brightly, as they would wish us to do.

A report from each department Chairman follows, so that I shall not account for their work here. Great credit is due them for their zeal and loyalty to a cause and the efficiency and consecration given to their tasks. After nine years as Chairman of the Exchange Mrs. Stevens resigned in March. We shall miss her cheerful greetings at our meetings, but under her successor, Miss Anna Sibley, may we carry on and keep the standard of the *Cheerful Letter* Exchange flying high, and after each conference go home feeling that in some way we have helped to lighten another's burden and in so doing have helped to ease some longing in our own heart.

"Not what we give but what we share,
For the gift, without the giver, is bare."

Respectfully submitted,

MRS. GORDON W. BROOKFIELD,
Secretary.

May 27, 1937.

CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE

This is the ninth annual report that I have had the privilege of presenting. Nine interesting years of unusual opportunities to cultivate pen friends of widely separated environment and opportunity, which has, indeed, broadened my horizon, and given to me a finer understanding of the aims and purposes of *Cheerful Letter* work.

Many changes have taken place in our Central Committee family this year, yet the work seemed to go forward with the same zeal and loyalty, which proves that the *cause* for which one labors is the real factor. Any cause which has stood the acid test of time and usage in this hectic world of pomp and circumstance, and, in spite of the ebb and flow of world events has moved steadily forward as have various departments of the Exchange deserves even a stronger connotation than my personal definition, "A Friendly Visitor."

Yet, isn't being "A Friendly Visitor," or receiving a visitor in a friendly spirit something this old world needs?

A simple definition of Religion that has ever appealed to me is: "Giving the best of oneself to the best one knows," and with that common denominator may I say that *Cheerful Letter* work has been my religion for nine years. It would be difficult indeed to find more loyalty in any group than I have found and I ask you to give in like measure to my successor.

As Bible Chairman for this year, fifty-six new Bibles and two Pulpit Bibles have been distributed in answer to requests. From the Minister who received a Pulpit Bible came this acknowledgment, "The beautiful Bible arrived safely. It will help so much to enrich the service of our little church. We thank you sincerely." It is with a feeling of satisfaction that every request for Bibles has been filled, in accordance with the earliest custom of the Exchange. Through the friendly cooperation of the Massachusetts Bible Society, new, clear print Bibles can be obtained at a reasonable price, which eliminates the necessity of using old editions with fine print.

Sincere appreciation is due to Canton, Mass., Alliance for the gift of over nine hundred practically new books suitable for rural schools and supplementary reading in higher grades. The books have been disbursed through the Secretary of the Exchange and have been widely distributed where the need was most urgent.

The following reports of department Chairmen confirm my oft-repeated statement that such consecration to Service can never be adequately tabulated. If the cause is right there is joy in the doing which transcends the moments of dis-

couragement which come to everyone at times.

Regretfully the resignations of Mrs. Bowser, Library Chairman, and Mrs. Dillaby, Home Study Chairman, were accepted and new leaders were chosen. With the new Chairman of the Exchange and her new Secretary the work will go forward. My prayer is that they find joy in the Friendly Service of *Cheerful Letter*.

May I again express my sincere thanks to my co-workers, who have given so graciously and unstintingly of their time and resources for a *cause* very dear to my heart. Let us all resolve to return promptly our questionnaires next year.

Faithfully yours,

MABELLE H. STEVENS.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRESPONDENTS AND APPEALS

In this Department are the records of every *Cheerful Letter* member, the foundation of all *Cheerful Letter* work. The filing system now in use has proved a successful one and gives a firm and accurate background with which to carry on the work. Without these up-to-date records we would be lost with the volume of correspondence arriving daily. All mail has to be assorted and checked carefully. A day never passes without a letter or a postcard from someone interested.

During the year 1936-1937 the General Alliance reported three hundred and eighty-two branches, two hundred and twenty-seven having *Cheerful Letter* committees. How we wish it were possible to interest the other one hundred and fifty-five! We would like to call attention to the pleasant contacts which have been maintained with all local chairmen this past year, and we look forward to the same cooperative spirit in the years to come. So many fine letters have reached us from the various chairmen complimenting the Department on its progress. Each year, we notice more evening branches becoming interested in the educational work.

As most of us know, the primary interest is the *regular correspondent*, and one hundred and fifty-five branches reported a monthly correspondence. About one hundred and four new *regular correspondents* have been adopted this past year by fifty branches.

Second in interest are the Appeals, a new set appearing in the Magazine each month. During the year, one hundred and seventeen Appeals were published and more Christmas cheer sent than ever before in our existence.

Third, is the rural school and its teacher, an experiment of a year ago which now has become an established feature with all sorts of educational possibilities ahead. Several branches which lost interest in the *Cheerful Letter* Exchange have awakened to a renewed responsibility in fostering a rural school. Thirty-two rural schools are now on our permanent list.

The Enrollment Blank still remains the popular way of becoming a member of the Exchange and states clearly our purposes, so a shut-in from the very first understands our rules and purposes. Of course, some Enrollment Blanks are not accepted because the first answer shows that the shut-in does not care or need our friendly service. On these Blanks a shut-in has the privilege of stating her preference, a *regular correspondent* or an Appeal. The *regular correspondent* belongs to a branch and it is up to the local workers to see that a letter or reading is sent monthly, if possible. An Appeal appears in the Magazine and is answered by any of our workers interested, but only once, and never adopted as a *regular correspondent*.

Suggestions to the workers have been printed monthly in the Magazine with the hope that they have been of some help to the new local workers.

The type letters received by the Department are not so interesting as those received by the local workers. Of necessity, they are mostly in the form of requests for a *regular correspondent*, an Appeal or a rural school, and very frequently say that the local worker has forgotten to write. You in the field are the fortunate ones—you get the whole

story and it is in your power to guide these lonesome shut-ins into better paths, to brighten their lives a bit, and offer educational assistance.

In the work of ours the greatest cost is postage and if your branch treasury does not supply an appropriation, a food sale or party will give you a small revenue to work with. It is not necessary to buy materials. At all Alliance meetings ask for contributions, which, of course, will be second-hand, but not used or worn out. Generally, all members cooperate in this respect. If you are in doubt as to what can be sent, on special occasions, to keep within our rules, please apply for a printed list of articles.

This work has many heartaches, as you all know. It is difficult to realize that so much suffering still goes on in these United States. But until conditions are better, the *Cheerful Letter* Exchange still has plenty of work to perform, in the way of comfort, joy and education. In your hands are the loving letters of appreciativeness for our small effort—just a few words of cheerfulness, comfort and kindness — the individual human touch. It is hard to believe a person when they say they have no time for letter writing. Just once a month does not seem too much of a task, especially when the return is so joyous. We depend upon you who are already in the work, together with new local workers, to spread lots of sunshine the coming year and also to help us enlarge the work of this Department. More letter writers are needed in order that more shut-ins may share in our friendly service.

Another year fades into history carrying with it a term of great accomplishment under the loving direction of our faithful chairman, Mabelle H. Stevens, who has just recently resigned her position to a new chairman. Vision again comes to mind as we look to another year. That is what we need to keep before us in this work of opportunity. This ideal will carry us FORWARD!

LAURA M. HURST,
Chairman Correspondents and Appeals.

HOME STUDY DEPARTMENT

Early this spring, Mrs. Dillaby, your former chairman, passed her work on to me in a compact, well-organized form, and I felt rather well acquainted with the department after our pleasant meeting, in which she introduced me, on paper, to all the teachers waiting eagerly for pupils, and to the too few pupils working away at home, preparing something to be praised by a faraway teacher. Mrs. Dillaby reported twenty-four pupils at work. Of this number I have since learned that at least four are not active. We have a splendid list of teachers, twenty-seven in all. Eighteen are in Massachusetts, two each in New Hampshire and Ohio, and one each in Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, Maine and New York. Our list includes one man.

One music teacher writes that her pupil "has saved up money enough and bought a piano, thus realizing a dream of years." Another reports, "My pupil shows a very fine intelligence and ability. His understanding is definitely beyond the usual high school age." Personally I have enjoyed working with a young southern girl who writes that she never expects to do much with her English "except read and write letters and maybe write a short story for pastime." To be quite personal, how many of our own number could or would use our leisure moments in writing short stories for pastime?

That is the type of person we wish to reach through the *Cheerful Letter* Exchange, and we want to find many more of them—people who want to work, who can appreciate and benefit by both praise and criticism, who will enjoy looking back over a good year's work realizing the progress they have made.

The department already has teachers offering Greek, home economics, journalism, bookkeeping, science, English literature and composition, braille, algebra, music, drawing, German, Latin, and we know that many more subjects can be included when the demand arises. We wish particularly that many more pupils would join our English work, as expressing our-

selves clearly and understanding what other people have expressed will be an ever-increasing social advantage.

The department has sent out books as needed, among them an algebra, a religious booklet, an art book, an English grammar, two spellers, five dictionaries.

Correspondence teaching of this sort requires a great deal of tact, as only by reading between the lines can a teacher judge of the disposition of her pupil. There is the consequent danger of too enthusiastic praise on the one hand, or too severe criticism on the other. But a teacher soon finds herself eagerly awaiting the next set of papers from her pupil, as she realizes that a test is being made not only of the pupil's ability to learn, but also of her ability to teach.

The Home Study Department closes the year with an enrollment of twenty-seven teachers and twenty pupils. I am looking forward to welcoming many more pupils to our department; and in closing this my first report I wish to thank all the teachers for their enthusiastic help, and to send a word of friendly encouragement to all our pupils.

Respectfully submitted,
ETHEL H. STUDLEY,
Chairman.

LIBRARY DEPARTMENT

It is with pride and pleasure that I present the annual report of the library department of the *Cheerful Letter* Exchange—more pleasure than pride, for I can claim no real degree of ownership previous to the last six months. I remind myself, too, that I have really a small part in the actual collection and distribution of all this material. It is easy, comparatively to tell "A" to send her books to Georgia, to tell "B" to send hers to North Carolina. Of course, I admit that it is not always as easy as it sounds, and we do go to a good deal of trouble to find just the place to which to send each collection. I receive constant inspiration from my communications. I am kept very busy trying to catch up with you most energetic women. I am amazed at the zeal with which you approach the *Cheerful Letter* work. I feel that come what may, the work will go on!

Since November 1st, I have written nearly one hundred letters, many about new appeals, many concerning the distribution of material collected. The very names in my files quicken my imagination—Trout Dale for the spring time, Meadows of Dan for summer, Mouth of Wilson, Green Cove, Green Bay, Winding Gulf, and I would like to see Roaring River. It makes me feel like being on my feet doing something.

Fifty-three branches have sent 6487 books into 21 states, Canada, Virgin Islands and Labrador, exactly 200 more than last year. The grand total of 14,754 magazines, together with extra miscellaneous material such as sheet music, maps, art supplies, Sunday school material, Educational scrap books, pictures, cards and booklets, is greater by 5,000 than last year.

This shows an appreciable increase, a very healthful state of affairs, I think we can all agree. Only eleven states were active, however, with Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey leading by hundreds. Just think what a tremendous amount of good we might do, cheer we might bring, if every branch of the Alliances did something in this department this coming year. The branches sending the most books this year were Montclair, N. J. and All Souls, New York, totaling over 1400. The branches doing the most with magazines were All Souls, New York, Roxbury, Hingham and Leominster, Mass., totaling over 6000, nearly half the total number. There are forty-two new cards in our files, eight Southern schools and five adopted schools. The rest represent donations, largely to more local schools and institutions. One hundred and ten books from the incomparable collection of nearly one thousand school books which Canton Alliance purchased and gave to us are going to Labrador along with much interesting educational material and a wealth of magazines.

So my conclusions are that more books and magazines and educational material are going out, more branches are actively participating, more places are receiving —this year 132 against 128 of last year. May I express my pleasure in the work and my appreciation of your cooperation. Let us look forward to another year—the biggest and best ever.

Respectfully submitted,

MRS. NEAL D. RANDALL,
Chairman.

CANARY WORLD

GUSTAV ECKSTEIN

Before the canaries came, the laboratory where I work was the usual ferro-concrete cell, with the addition of a radio and a Steinway Grand; a chemical bench through the middle, scientific equipment, four 100-watt lights. A hygienic place. And out of it the canaries created something quite original—the world in which they were to live.

I bought the first canary at a bird store eleven years ago, three days before Christmas. You did not have to know about canaries to see that her wooden cage was too small: I decided to let her out. Wobbly in her tail, wobbly in her wings, nevertheless by noon next day she could fly to the tops of the lower sashes of all four windows, to the transom rods, the radio, the filing cabinet.

There is something in the air the afternoon before Christmas Eve. I got it into my head that that female was lonely. So I bought another canary, the founder of the family, a male whom I called Father. By March it was clear that Father was too much for Mother. She looked run down. And that is how I came to buy another wife for Father, a striped one whom I called Striped Mother, and with Striped Mother was completed the first generation.

One evening—this now more than a year after that first Christmas—I saw Striped Mother poke her head out from under the filing cabinet to look up at me, and what amazed me was that she was not interested in my feet and not in my body but in my eyes. That was the true beginning of this history—the moment I first felt the fascination of the canary mind.

I had noticed her at all only because of the awkward way she had to twist her head through half a circle to see up to my eyes. But it was my feet that might step on her, and they were down where she might watch them without going to that trouble. Like every creature she was anxious to have safe the world around her. I was the most important part of that world, and a bump it gave me to realize that that scrap of canary was trying to get information about me from my eyes. Was trying to do to me the very thing I was trying to do to her—understand me.

Now I recalled that when the females were collecting the materials for their nests, I could interrupt even that deep instinct—if I turned my eyes their way. Again, I long had known I might prevent a mother feeding her babies, at least make her nervous. And queerest—I must not use my eyes on that frequent gesture of affection when one grown-up bird was feeding another. The two would stop, as if I had made them shy.

I soon discovered that Father had what among men is spoken of as consciousness of leadership. When Father planted his feet on the edge of the music book on the Steinway rack and prepared to sing, I was always able to make anybody see how much he resembled that big-bodied Belgian violinist, Ysaye, who also planted his feet as if he were determined to draw the melodies up through his body out of the earth. But Father was not only an extraordinary singer. He was an extraordinary teacher too.

I never knew that a bird lesson could be that formal, or a bird teacher have such patience. Ordinarily Father taught one or two sons at a time, but more if more drifted in. He would sing their notes with them till they got them clear, perhaps three notes, then lengthen the three, sing upwards from them, sing downwards from them, and only after that start the trills. In the course of

a lesson Father might wander off on something that interested him more as artist than as teacher, and for that he liked quiet and if he did not get quiet might lean across and give someone near him a whack. But the lessons were lessons, unmistakably; and because of much hearing of the piano he knew things other canaries never learn. In the best periods the male voices all modulated as fast as the piano—did not follow the melody, but changed key as the piano changed key.

Canary voices are affected by anything. In the parts of the year when I am using the typewriter most, all the voices go up. One twilight there was a tone so different that though I was hard at work I heard it. It was not like canary song—more like a stir of air, an unbelievably rapid quivering. It was Chicken, one of the young birds. Where except in his own mind could the little bird have heard anything like that?

I had given up thinking of this when again one twilight, the College silent, I was just able tc make out down the hall and through two doors the noise of someone's noiseless typewriter. Just able. I had never heard this before, and the only reason I heard it now was because my ears were prepared by Chicken's tone. But at that distance the machine had almost the same quality as this little bird's vanishing music.

Chiefly the male sings to serenade the female, as everybody knows. When the male sings to the female his whole body sings. If you have not before seen it you think it overdone acting—the way the whole anxious body advances toward her on its toes. Puck, Father's second son, a polygamist if ever there was one, I have seen sing to four ladies at once. With Puck it was any lady, all ladies, same song to all ladies, same pressure, same order of events, heat turned on as mechanical as a faucet, every step in the love sequence a trifle more brilliant than any nephew or brother.

Sometimes a serenade might end in a singer contest, strain come into the voices, the pitch rise, and in 30 seconds everything be altered. It is difficult for the human singer to hold a big tone as long as three quarters of a minute, yet a canary when he wants to win can hold a tone even longer, and this is more bewildering because he breathes so much faster than we—90 to 120 times in the minute against our 12 to 18. But when the excitement of song is on him he does not want to stop at all to breathe, and it is said that birds have ruptured blood vessels and died in such a singer feast. What happens usually is that into this contest of two singers another and another is drawn, till what may have begun as a kind of reading of poetry becomes a fierce chorus of battling voices.

The call-notes that many times a day went between husband and wife were certainly speech. Then there were the various cries, the cry of the mother to her fledglings, of a leader to the Community; and the warnings that rose up day and night. But the most stirring speech I ever heard was Father's, the terrible time when because of someone's carelessness most of the population flew out into a February night.

What was I to do?

At least it seemed good sense to start playing the piano, and this I did. There was no result that night. But when I started again the following morning with the dawn it turned out that the canaries came nearer as soon as they heard the piano. To do so they had every yard of the way to challenge the sparrows, and that took courage. It also took great exertion because those flights out-of-doors were much longer than the birds were used to. Father and two sons entered at the very first tones, and it was after that that canary song was put to the most remarkable use I was ever to witness. Father sang back his family. He stood there on the sill, sang and sang, as if to burst his throat, and one by one his children came in.

When Christmas 1931 came round, I went to the bird store and bought the canaries another bird.

I called him Striped Male. Out of his prison in a flash! Gay yellow and brown,

head bristling, back arched—*drum major!* He tramped to the front of the Steinway, estimated the distance to my table, gambled, made it. He had not had too easy a time keeping himself in the air, yet no sooner did he land and get a fresh footing, on he continued to the bookcase.

The whole population was silent.

Several were below the bookcase on the zinc-top table, eating. They stopped. He looked down on them, joined them. His diet at the bird store had not been much besides water and seeds, but that did not prevent him recognizing higher food. However, he thought best first to make sure that all this was his—without warning gave the amazed bird next him a half dozen pecks, and the one next, so on, everybody scooting to the four corners.

The table thus cleared, Striped Male began nonchalantly to eat.

And this continued. When Striped Male ate egg no one ate egg. When Striped Male ate banana no one ate Banana. When Striped Male thought he liked one special perch whoever was on got off.

By human standards he remained vulgar. But it was Striped Male whom delicate Striped Daughter took for a mate. She had never paired off with anyone before. From this on the two were inseparable. Striped Male's courtship went right on after the marriage. Every ambition of his own he had given up to devote himself to this female. Naturally he would beat her, but what can be justly said is that the personal lives of the two apart from each other had no serious meaning. From morning till night their joint flights cut the air, as parallel as lines drawn with a ruler and remaining so for all her young-wife changes of direction. Briefly, Striped Daughter and Striped Male had that kind of relation of which one says: "Nothing can go wrong in that."

1932. Christmas. Again I bought a new bird—Crusty—and it was for her that it happened, what I thought never could—Striped Male deserted Striped Daughter. In the weeks that followed I watched Striped Daughter, but if she was hurt she kept it where no man's eye could see. Her busy life buzzed on as it had. And Crusty was all day followed by her slave, as Striped Daughter had been.

Crusty this whole winter held her man. Yet I could not be rid of—well, my opinion is, Striped Male visited with Striped Daughter now and then. Whether the change of feeling was gradual or all at once I do not know. Yet I do know that on the first of March I saw Striped Male flying in parallel streaks with Striped Daughter again. The husband back with the wife. Over Striped Daughter was the old world-scouring busyness. Looking at her you still would have said that nothing had happened. Looking at him you would not have been so sure.

But the picture I would leave with you is of song. Sundays when the New York Philharmonic would begin to come over the radio the whole spirit of the place would change. The radio stands against the south wall between the windows, and after awhile you always believed that the orchestra was literally down in that box. This gave to the laboratory out in front of the box the feeling of being a great hall with the singing canary audience all around the balcony of it.

Fabulous canary singing on those fabulous Sundays! All the males would sing, often a female. Once Striped Daughter sang through half a concert. It was that heavenly afternoon when great Toscanini played the Ninth Symphony—took Schola Cantorum, Metropolitan soloists, Philharmonic Society, wrenched them out of themselves, or back into themselves, I do not know which. And this canary singing was not speech, not love-making. No, these tiny birds with their tiny voices that Sunday afternoon came very near to man's own high conception of art for art's sake, song for song's sake, the creation of impersonal beauty.

—Condensed from "Canary, the History of a Family."

WITH OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE BEADED MONSTER

By ESTHER E. REEKS

"Where do the Indians get the patterns for their bead work?" asked Mary May, who, with her parents, had recently moved from the East to live near her cousin John in Arizona. "That is such a queer mixed-up sort of a pattern," indicating a beaded belt in the window of a curio shop, "all irregular circles and broken bands. I don't see how they thought of such things."

"I'll show you where they got the idea," returned her cousin. "Come on over to Jake's filling station and you'll know."

The two crossed over and went down the street a couple of blocks. "Where's Beastie?" inquired the boy of the man in attendance as they drew up at the station.

"Over there under the cactus bush," and the man indicated the desert garden at the back. "He's beginning to wake up now that it's getting a little cooler."

John led the way and soon they discovered a strange-looking creature sprawled out in the shade of a prickly pear. "Here's your Indian-belt pattern," announced John.

Mary May looked hard. What she saw was a rounded object, some two feet in length, including a thick tail, brownish black and pink in color, and looking as though it was covered with beads in a pattern almost identical with that of the belt they had just seen.

"What is it?" she questioned, unable to decide whether it was a living thing or a beaded bag of some sort.

"A Gila monster; or to be more explicit, a big lizard, the largest of the lizards of the United States. Don't you see his feet?"

"I do now," returned Mary, "but I didn't at first. How much like hands they look, with the fingers all spread out. But I never thought a lizard looked like that. Most lizards don't wear beads all over their skin."

"No, they don't. This one is known as the beaded lizard, only they are not really beads. You see he wears a very tough coat with little horny projections all over it that look from a little distance like beads. The Indians sometimes tan the skins and use them in different ways. But mostly they are afraid of the monsters."

"Are they really dangerous?" queried Mary.

"Oh, no. Their bite is poison to small animals and sometimes to humans, but they are lazy things and don't often take the trouble to bite. They'd rather run than fight unless cornered. It's just superstition on the part of the Indians that makes them afraid, I guess. Jake has had this one as a mascot for a long time and he has never hurt anyone. Of course he is kept chained up, but that is so he will not go back to his desert home.

"You see, the Gila monster is a desert lizard, just like the horned lizard that you always wanted to call a toad. Only he is not so fond of the hot sun as that spiny little fellow. The monster stays in the shade through the day and does his going about at night. For about three months of the hottest part of the summer he does nothing but sleep, day and night. Further north, the horned lizards sleep for three months during the coldest part of the winter.

"But where do you suppose the beaded lizard stores up his food in time of plenty to live on when he is asleep or when food gets scarce?

"Why, right in his tail. That's chiefly what he has a tail for. When he gets all he can possibly eat, his tail gets big and round because it fills up with fat. Then when he has nothing at all to eat, the fat goes to feed other parts of his body. Don't you wish you could carry your cupboard around with you like that?"

"Not if I had to be as awkward looking as he," returned Mary May. "He is all right for a bead-work pattern, but as anything else, I don't think much of his looks. I'm glad, though, you showed him to me, for you certainly do have some of the oddest creatures here."

"That's the fun of it," asserted John.

—*The Beacon.*

THE PICNICKERS

By Rose B. Foster

"Mother, let's go picnicking." Esther had been teasing her mother for an hour.

"But, little daughter, dear, Mother is too busy, far too busy this short Saturday morning to plan a picnic lunch for you and the twinnies."

"Couldn't we get everything ready, ourselves?"

"What, Esther, you? Sandwiches and cocoa and cups and plates? How could you, dear? Besides, I could not let you go alone."

Esther went out on the back steps and thought hard. She was sure that she could make sandwiches, peanut and ham and jam and other kinds, but even if she could, she knew that her mother would never let them go alone.

"Good morning, Esther, what are you playing?"

Esther jumped up, recognizing that cheery, laughing voice as belonging to one person, one greatly beloved person, her teacher, Miss Clarke.

"I'm thinking, Miss Clarke," she answered.

"Let me help you think," Miss Clarke said, sitting down on the steps.

Esther told her all about the desired picnic, for how could Miss Clarke think unless she knew what to think about? Miss Clarke and Esther both thought. Presently, Miss Clarke said,—

"I know."

They went into the kitchen and talked to Esther's mother.

"All we need," said Miss Clarke, "is a frying pan, a bottle of milk, a little butter, a little salt and a big spoon."

Miss Clarke and Esther carried the basket between them, and the twins, Pepsy and Nipsy, ran ahead. They went to the little bakery where crusty French rolls were sold. They bought eight.

"That's two apiece," said six-year-old Nipsy, who was good at numbers.

They went to the grocery and bought a half-dozen eggs, a box of graham crackers and a box of marshmallows.

"Aren't we going to have any sandwiches?" Pepsy asked.

They went to the tiny stream in the woods at the foot of Ash Street. It was a long walk and they became hungry. They started a fire, scout-fashion, with one match, for Miss Clarke knew all about such things. While the fire was burning down to a bed of "cooking coals," Miss Clarke gave the picnickers each a roll and showed them how to break off one crusty end and pull out all the soft bread inside.

"Don't break your crusty cup," cautioned Miss Clarke.

She then melted butter into the frying pan and carefully broke some of the eggs into the golden fluid. She added a little milk, a little salt, and stirred and stirred the mixture until it became creamy and yellow, and oh, so fragrant to their hungry senses.

"Why, it's scrambled eggs," exclaimed Esther. "How can we eat them without plates?"

"Or forks?"

Miss Clarke pulled the pan from the coals.

"Give me your crusty cups," she said.

She filled Pepsy's crusty cup full of the steaming golden mixture, and she filled Nipsy's cup and Esther's and her own.

"Now eat it as you would eat an ice cream cone," she suggested, setting the example herself.

They took delicious nibbles all around the crusty rolls. They smacked their lips. They took generous bites. They licked their fingers.

"Let's make some more," they shouted.

Miss Clarke was willing and soon they were busy with a second helping.

"How do we drink the milk?" Esther asked. "We forgot the cups."

Miss Clarke took the egg shells, so neatly broken into halves, filled them with milk and passed them around.

"Did you ever hear of egg-shell china?" she asked, twinkling her eyes.

"Grandmother had some," Esther informed her. "It's awfully scarce."

"This is better," mumbled Nipsy, "because if you drop it you can get more."

"Now for the marshmallows," said Miss Clarke.

They toasted them on pointed sticks. Miss Clarke opened the box of crackers. Esther's marshmallow was toasted first. Miss Clarke helped her press it between two crackers.

"Oh, marshmallow sammies!" shouted Pepsy.

"Fix mine, please," begged Nipsy.

"Oh, Miss Clarke," Pepsy declared, "you are the very picnickingest person I ever saw."

They put out their fire after burning every scrap and made their camping place scout-clean.

"Let's do it again, some time," begged Nipsy.

"And again and again," echoed Pepsy.

"Thank you and thank you and thank you, Miss Clarke," Esther chanted, as they walked home through the golden afternoon. —*The Beacon.*

REMEMBER

Always remember to forget
The things that made you sad,
But never forget to remember
The things that made you glad.

Always remember to forget
The friends that proved untrue,
But never forget to remember
Those that have stuck by you.

Always remember to forget
The troubles that passed away
But never forget to remember
The blessings that come each day.

—LEVI FURBUSH.

Do your work, be honest, keep your word, help when you can, be fair.

—*J. P. Morgan's Business Motto.*

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE

MISS ANNA E. SIBLEY, *Chairman*, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.
MRS. GORDON W. BROOKFIELD, *Secretary*, 32 Maple Avenue, Sharon, Mass.
MISS EDITH L. JONES, *Treasurer*, 11 Dana Street, Cambridge, Mass.

Meetings at 25 Beacon Street, Boston, at 10.30 A.M. the first Friday of each month from October to May inclusive.

ITS PURPOSE

To cheer and comfort those who are ill, lonely, or discouraged, and to give to those living far from a church some of the inspiration of the printed word by the publication of one good sermon, or similar article in each issue of the *Cheerful Letter Magazine.* Only such simple religious truths and principles as are agreed upon by all churches are printed.

To help those who live far from schools, or who wish to continue their studies by means of correspondence with a teacher.

To establish Circulating Libraries in isolated communities, schools, and colleges in rural and mountain districts where public libraries and other educational privileges are not available.

WHERE TO WRITE

Letters containing subscriptions to the paper, fifty cents a year, and *money from the Sunshine Bags* should be sent to the Cheerful Letter Exchange, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. Checks or postal orders should be made payable to the Cheerful Letter Exchange.

Letters asking for correspondents and appeals to be printed in the *Cheerful Letter Magazine* should be sent to Mrs. Laura M. Hurst, 78 Penfield Street, Roslindale, Mass.

Letters asking for help in studying at home, and *requests from teachers and mothers who desire educational assistance,* should be sent to Miss Ethel H. Studley, 56 School Street, Hingham, Mass.

Letters about the establishment of Circulating Libraries should be sent to Mrs. Neal D. Randall, *Chairman,* 12 Stearns Street, Westwood, Mass. A Circulating Library will be started in any small community that is in need of one, if proper location and care can be furnished and satisfactory references given.

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